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63

WOOD FAMILY GENEALOGY

Direct line of descent from
John Wood, who died in Portsmouth, R. I., in 1655
To Edith (Edson) Benner (1870-1959), and her children and grandchildren.
(Twelve generations)

By

Dorothy (Benner) Whitbeck,
daughter of Willis and Edith (Edson) Benner, and
wife of John F. W. Whitbeck.

New York City,

1962.

A word of caution must precede the following pages:

Discrepancies relating to WILLIAM WOOD (III) that this writer has been unable to resolve are as follows:

1. WILLIAM WOOD (III) is said in WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD (p. 3 hereof) to have died in 1711, whereas a will purporting to be his, as shown in DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, etc., by Preston (p. 4 hereof), is said to have been dated 1748 and proved in 1756.

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2. Also as to WILLIAM (III) (p. 4 hereof), there is a discrepancy between the date of birth of his wife, Ann Clark--given as 1682, and the date of birth of their first child--given as 1689.

Otherwise, authorities given herein all serve to substantiate the line as set forth here, even though this writer believes there has been some confusion with respect to the records relating to the first three generations of this branch of the Wood family.

WOOD

There is set forth below by Dorothy (Benner) Whitbeck an outline of the direct line of descent of her mother, Edith (Edson) Benner, daughter of Franklin and Fanny Cameron (Wood) Edson and wife of Willis Benner, from John Wood who died in Portsmouth, Rhode Island, in 1655, the first of this Wood line as to whom this writer has been able to find any record. There also will be added the children and grandchildren of Willis and Edith (Edson) Benner to bring the record about them down to date in 1962. References will be set forth at the end to sources of much Wood family information.

I. JOHN WOOD

A family paper written out by Edward Townsend Wood, born in Bath, Steuben County, New York, May 10, 1829--ninth generation in descent from this John Wood--states that John Wood "Came from England," and that "he settled in Connecticut." This writer has been unable to verify these statements, but has found ~~[illegible]~~ references to him which include the following:

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS. (full reference given at end hereof) gives the following record as to him:

Page 41

"JOHN (1) WOOD Came to America. Portsmouth, R. I. and Swansea.
Born (In Plymouth 1643) Married 1st
Married 2nd

He died 1655

CHILDREN

4 WILLIAM (2) Wood b. Md. MARTHA EARLE See Page 51
He died 1697 dau. of Ralph and Joan (Savage) Earle.
5 Margaret (2) Wood b. Md. Thomas Manchester
1st George (2) Wood
Eldest son
2d John (2) Wood Md. Mary Newport, R. I.
3rd Thomas (2) Wood b. Md. Rebecca See Page 42
6 Susanna (2) Wood b. Md.
7 Elizabeth (2) Wood Md. 1st Samuel Wheaton 1677
he died 1683
She md. 2nd time Samuel Bowen May 26, 1684.
(All children born before 1656)
John (1) Portsmouth, R. I. and Dartmouth, Mass. Page 51."

GENEALOGICAL DICTIONARY OF RHODE ISLAND (Austin)--(full reference given at end hereof) says of John Wood I:

"I. John m. (1)
m. (2)
Portsmouth, R. I.
In 1655 Town Council chose appraisers of his estate.
Children:

1. George
2. John, who m. Mary
3. Thomas, m. Rebecca
Portsmouth, R. I., Swanzey, Mass.
4. William, m. Martha Earle
Portsmouth, R. I., Dartmouth, Mass.
5. Margaret
m. Thomas Manchester
6. Susanna
7. Elizabeth

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, R. I. (Preston) (full reference given at end hereof) says of John Wood I:

JOHN WOOD, of Portsmouth, apparently twice married for the settlement of his estate, 1655, is so worded that the widow is seemingly mother of the "two youngest." (Must have been first married as early as 1635.) Children (8, of whom 3 are carried forward):

John b. ; m. Mary Peabody
Thomas b. ; m. Rebecca
William b. ; m. Martha Earle

GENEALOGY OF THE WOOD FAMILY AND ALLIED LINES by George E. Wood --full reference at end--gives the following:

"Wood Family
First Generation in America

John Wood, (d. 1655), married twice, second wife Elizabeth. Children:

George
John
Thomas
William (m. Martha Earle)
Margaret (m. Thomas Manchester)
Susanna
Elizabeth (m. Samuel Wheaton 1677-8)

The second generation in this book continues with Thomas, who m. Rebecca - not our line so not copied here. The foreword of this book says "Many different immigrants by the name of John Wood came to this country at different times. The compiler here enumerates 12 of them in an effort to locate the John Wood of Portsmouth."

II. WILLIAM WOOD (John[1])

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS., say of him:

"WILLIAM (2) WOOD, son of John (1)
Born — Md. MARTHA (2) EARLE, dau. of Ralph and Joan

Died Feb. 3, 1696

CHILDREN

WILLIAM (3) WOOD, jr.	b. 1652 died 1711	Md. Ann Clark	Page 88
George (3) Wood	b.	Md. Ann Wilbur, Dec. 4, 1717	
Josiah (3) Wood	b. died 1711		~~Page 92~~
Daniel (3) Wood	b.	Md. Md. 1st Elizabeth Ricketson Md. 2d Phebe Sherman 1738/9	Page 92
Joseph (3) Wood	b. 1664	Mary (3) Church, dau. of Joseph (2) and Mary, dau. of Joseph (2) Richard (1)	
Mary (3) Wood		Md. Thomas Mallets of N. Y. (Note: Elsewhere "Newport.")	
Sarah (3) Wood			
Margaret (3) Wood			
Rebecca (3) Wood	b.	Md."	

GENEALOGICAL DICTIONARY OF RHODE ISLAND (Austin)--says of William II:

"Portsmouth, R. I., Dartmouth, Mass.
1686, Dartmouth, took oath of fidelity.
1697, Inventory of possessions (listed)
10 children
m. Martha Earle, daughter of Ralph and Joan ( ) Earle.

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, R. I. (Preston) says of him:

"William Wood m. Martha Earle, daughter of Ralph and Joan (Savage) Earle.
b. probably as early as 1640
d. 1697--probably Jan. 1696-7
m. about 1666-7 (Martha Earle)
He was of Dartmouth - will dated April 15, 1689 - estate settled in 1701

CHILDREN:

William	George	
Mary	Joseph	
Sarah	Jonathan---)	Possibly the
Margaret	Daniel)	same?
Rebecca	Josiah)	
	John------)	

III. WILLIAM WOOD (William[2], John[1].)

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS., say of him:

"WILLIAM (3) WOOD, son of William (2) and Martha (Earle) Wood Page 88
Married Ann Clark, born 1682
Daughter of Latham and Hannah (Wilbur)
Clark, of Rochester* (See note later)
705 MARY CLARK.

CHILDREN

Mary (4) Wood	b. May 23, 1689; died 1706	
Rachel (4) twin	b. April 1691	
William (4) Wood	m. 1st Elizabeth 2d Keziah	
Hannah (4) Wood	died young	
Isaac (4) Wood twins	b. April 22, 1693.	Isaac (4) Wood md. Mary Potter of Rochester. P. 94
Hannah (4) Wood	b. Oct. 12, 1695	Md. Nicholas Davis, 1724
Jonathan (4) Wood	b. May 22, 1697	Md. Peace Davis Aug. 1724 dau. of Timothy
Abigail Wood	b. Feb. 27, 1699	Died 1704 aged 6 years
P. 102 JEDIDIAH WOOD	b. July 26, 1700	Md. Keziah Summers, dau. of John of Rochester.
Ruth Wood	b. April 9, 1702	Died 1714 aged 12 years
Meribah Wood	b. April 12, 1704	Md. Moses Sherman, Feb. 23, 1730 She md. 2d time John Rone, 1736, Dec. 27
Abigail Wood	b. 1706/7	Md. Kent
Ruth Wood	b.	Md. Abraham Stafford of Tiverton
Mary Wood	b. March 7, 1712."	(1739.

GENEALOGICAL DICTIONARY OF RHODE ISLAND (Austin) makes no mention of William III--does not carry down our line beyond William II.

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, R. I. (Preston) says of him:

b. (about 1668)
d. (probably Feb. 1755-6)
Will dated Dec. 12, 1748, proved March 2, 1756; Taunton probate book 14, p. 668; mentions son Jonathan, executor; children, eldest son William; heirs of son Isaac, dec., son Jedediah, son Jonathan, my three daughters, Abigail, Uen**, Ruth Stafford and Meribah Rone; certain grandchildren. No wife mentioned.

Mary
Rachael
William
Isaac, b. April 22, 1693, m. Mary Potter
Hannah
Jonathan
Abigail
Jedediah, b. July 26, 1700; m. Keziah Summers
Ruth
Meribah

(More about him in the book but not copied here.)

*Plymouth County, Mass.
**This writer believes "Uen" above was a mis-copy of the abbreviation "unm." for unmarried.

IV. JEDIDIAH WOOD (William[3], William[2], John[1])

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS., state as to him: "Born July 26, 1700 Married 353 KEZIAH SUMMERS of Rochester, daughter of John

CHILDREN

JOHN WOOD (5)	b. Feb. 27, 1725,	Md. 177 Hannah Wing (See below) 1744- 1, dau. of Benjamin and Content She Md. 2d time to Thomas Davis of Freetown 1754, son of Thomas and Lydia (Chase) Davis
Walter Wood	b. Sept. 3, 1730	
Ruth Wood	b. May 16, 1733	Md. Walter Cornell 1755
Isaac Wood	b. Aug. 20, 1735	Md. Ruth Barker, 1754
Eunice Wood	b. Nov. 19, 1737	Md. Jedidiah Allen 1756"

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, R. I. (Preston) says of Jedidiah IV:

b. July 26, 1700, Dartmouth
d. 1761 "
m. 12/26/1724, Rochester, Mass., Keziah Summers, dau. John.

Children: John, b. Feb. 27; 1725-6; m. Hannah Wing 12-27-1744
Walter, b. Sept. 3, 1730; d. bef. 1761
Ruth, b. May 16, 1733
Isaac, b. Aug. 20, 1735, m. Ruth Barker 2-6-1754
Eunice, b. Nov. 19, 1737

His (Jedidiah's) will proved March 10, 1761 - to wife Keziah land that father William Wood bought of Zachariah Allen; property to Keziah for life, then to grandson John Wood--etc., but not pertinent here.

VITAL RECORDS OF DARTMOUTH, MASS., TO THE YEAR 1850, Vol. I, Births:

"Jerydiah, s. William, July 26, 1700 (Judediah c. r. 3)

VITAL RECORDS OF DARTMOUTH, MASS., TO THE YEAR 1850, Vol. II, Marriages:

"Judediah (signed Jedediah) s. William of D., and Kezia Summers, d. John, dec'd of Rochester, Plimouth Co., 16th, 12 mo., "called February,' 1724-5, c. r. 3."

V. JOHN WOOD (Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1])

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS., give the following:

b. Feb. 27, 1725 Md. 177 Hannah Wing (See below)
1744- 1, dau. of Benjamin and Content
She md. 2d time to Thomas Davis of Freetown 1754,
son of Thomas and Lydia (Chase) Davis

Children:

John Wood b. 1745-6 Md. Dinah Hussey, 1769
Content Wood b. 1745 Md. Joseph Soul, July 16, 1772. (Note made in 1962: Mrs. Kenneth Coulson of Scipio Center, Cayuga Co., N. Y., reports that the Soul genealogy is on file in the Syracuse Pub. Lib.)
Do not know whether it shows Content.

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, R. I. (Preston) says of John V:

b. Feb. 27, 1725-6.
d. about 1754
m. Feb. 27, 1744-5 Hannah Wing (she m. 2d, March 18, 1754, Thomas Davis)

Children:

John, b. ; m. Dinah Hussey 12-20-1769
Content, b. ; m. Joseph Soule July 16, 1772, Tiverton.

Bristol Probate: Book 22, p. 143--
Division of estate (of John V) ordered May 6, 1755; returned dated Sept. 4, 1756; recorded December 2, 1773; "to Hannah, late widow;" to John Wood; certain notes of his grandfather, Jedediah Wood; to Content, the daughter---a note of Joseph Wing. (More but not copied; refers only to substitution of administrator.)

VITAL RECORDS OF DARTMOUTH, MASS., TO THE YEAR 1850, Vol. I, Births:

"John, s. Jedediah and Keziah, Feb. 27, 1725-6 (grand ch. William, c.r.3)"

VITAL RECORDS OF DARTMOUTH, MASS., TO THE YEAR 1850, Vol. II, Marriages:

"John, s. Jedidiah and Keziah of D., and Hannah Wing, d. Benjamin and Content of D., 27th 12 mo., 'called february,' 1744-5, c.r.3)"

In July, 1962, Miss Loretta E. Phaneuf, Genealogical Librarian of the Free Public Library, New Bedford, Mass., copied for the writer the following:

"LEONARD PAPERS by Elisha G. Leonard (Manuscript) Vol. 3: (ref. at end.)

"John Wood, son of Jedediah (William, William) born Feb. 27, 1725/6; mar. 12. 27. 1744/5; died 1754.
Wife Hannah Wing mar. Thomas Davis Freetown Mar. 18, 1754
Children:
John born _____ md. Dinah Hussey 12. 20. 1769
Content born _____ md. Joseph Soul Tiv. (Tiverton) July 16, 1772

Vol. 1
Hussey, Dinah, dau. Jonathan & Hephzibah born Mar. 11, 1752."

VI. JOHN WOOD (John[5], Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1])

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS., give:

"*John Wood (6) b. 1745-6 *Md. 89 Dinah Hussey, 1769."
"*Parents of Jethro Wood."

John Wood VI is mentioned in the will of his grandfather (see Jedediah IV above.)

VITAL RECORDS OF DARTMOUTH, MASS. TO THE YEAR 1850, Vol. II, Marriages:

"John, s. John and Hannah of D., and Dinah Hussey, d. Jonathan and Hephzibah of D., Dec. 20, 1769 c.r.3.)"

LEONARD PAPERS by Elisha G. Leonard--mss. on file in 1962 in the Free Public Library, New Bedford, Mass., Vol. I: "Hussey, Dinah, dau. of Jonathan & Hephzibah born Mar. 11, 1752."

The book JETHRO WOOD, INVENTOR OF THE MODERN PLOW, etc., by Frank Gilbert (see below) says of Dinah (Hussey) Wood, wife of John VI:

"Dinah Hussey Wood was a niece of Ann Starbuck, a woman of remarkable ability and high standing in colonial annals. Ann Starbuck was virtually Governor of Nantucket. The niece was a woman of excellent intellect and most winsome character. Her conversation sparkled with genial wit and good cheer. Her husband, John Wood, was a man of sterling worth, calm, self poised, strong willed and eminently influential."

A family paper written by Edward Townsend Wood, great grandson of John VI, says that after his marriage (1769):

"John Wood then removed with his young wife to White Creek, Washington County, New York, and became quite a prosperous and noted citizen;" ~~having been a Member of Assembly and State Senator from that county in the Legislature of the State of New York.~~"

(Unverified statement deleted.)

John VI and Dinah (Hussey) Wood had six children--all probably born in White Creek, Washington County, New York. A search was made by the County Historian of Washington County for the birth record of Jethro, son of John and Dinah (Hussey) Wood, but it was reported that New York State did not keep vital records until after 1880, and that no reference to Jethro could be found.

The six children of John and Dinah (Hussey) Wood were:

Jethro, m. Sylvia Howland -- see below.
Hannah, m. James Whippo of Scipio, Cayuga Co.
Content, m. Paul Cogshall (of New York City?)
Hepshibah, m. William Crippen of Scipio
Cynthia, m. Asil Mosher of Scipio (Son of Allen and Hannah (Eddy) Mosher
Anna, d. unmarried.

Of the above six children, four are mentioned in their father's will: Cynthia Mosher, deceased daughter Hephzibah Crippen, Hannah Whippo and Jethro. All six are given in "Historical Sketch of Friends in Cayuga County, New York," by Emily Howland, a paper otherwise unidentified by this writer, but a copy of which is in the writer's possession, found among family papers.

In HISTORY OF CAYUGA COUNTY, NEW YORK, by Elliott G. Storke (full reference at end) there is the following statement:

> "John Wood and Isaac Wood with their families, and James Wood and sister came in from Washington County, in 1799, and settled three miles south east of Aurora. John, who died on the place where he settled, was the father of Jethro Wood, the inventor of the cast iron plow, which was a vast improvement over the old 'bull plow' then in use."
>
> (With regard to the reference to "John and Isaac Wood and their families", it becomes necessary here to call attention to the fact that it was John Wood VI, son of John and Hannah (Wing) Wood, and his wife Dinah Hussey who settled a few miles east of Aurora in 1799. It also is important to note that this John had only a sister Content, and did not have a brother Isaac. This is substiantiated by the fact that ~~xxx~~ only John and Content are mentioned in their father's will (Bristol Probate: Book 22, p. 143: 'to Hannah, late widow," to John Wood certain notes of his grandfather, Jedediah Wood; to Content, the Daughter--a note of Joseph Wing.) However, this John's father, John V, did have a brother Isaac, and it would appear that John VI (aged 53 in 1799) and his uncle, Isaac (aged 64) were mistaken for brothers by the historian who wrote as follows, which statement this writer has been unable to reconcile:
>
> "John Wood and Isaac were brothers, Friends, from New Bedford, Mass. Isaac settled on the farm now owned by Stephen Barker. Mrs. Barker is a granddaughter. John Wood settled a mile south of the village of White Creek. His son, Jethro Wood, of Moravia, Cayuga Co., N. Y., was the patentee of the iron mould-board plow." (Taken from Johnson's History of Washington County, New York.))

John and Dinah (Hussey) Wood were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), and "Historical Sketch of Friends in Cayuga County" referred to above says that John and Dinah Wood settled near Aurora in 1799 with their daughters Anne, Content, Cynthia and Hepsibeth, also their married daughter Hannah Whippo and her husband, James Whippo, and that:

> "John Wood bought 600 acres of land at $3.50 per acre extending from the road running west from Poplar Ridge

to the next road on the south."

It is of interest here to note that Jethro (for whom see below), son of John and Dinah (Hussey) Wood, married in 1793 Sylvia Howland, daughter of Benjamin and Mary (Slocum) Howland of Dartmouth. The latter, Benjamin and Mary, had gone from Dartmouth to Saratoga County in 1791, and in 1798* settled in Aurora, where he was an extensive farmer. Thus it will be seen that Jethro and Sylvia (Howland) Wood followed her parents to Aurora in 1799, and Jethro's parents, John and Dinah (Hussey) Wood and their daughters followed Jethro and Sylvia a year later.

John Wood VI "died on the place where he settled" (HISTORY OF CAYUGA CO. by Storke) in 1809. His will was dated May 13, 1809, and it was probated June 8, 1809 (Cayuga Co. Surrogate's Office, Auburn, New York--Liber A1, p. 189.)

It is not known to this writer where John and Dinah (Hussey) Wood are buried --possibly on his "homestead farm," which was a custom in those early days. However, many members of both the Wood and Howland families are buried in what is known as the Old Homestead Cemetery in the Town of Ledyard, a couple of miles east of the village of Aurora, Cayuga County, the property for which was given by Benjamin Howland soon after he settled in Aurora in 1798* and where he and his wife Mary are buried. Mrs. Kenneth Coulson, living there in Scipio Center in 1962, who has been of great assistance to this writer in these matters, has copied the inscriptions on the headstones of many cemeteries in that area, and reports that she has found none for John or Dinah Wood. She adds, however, that inscriptions for early burials are not likely to be found as there are few marked stones before 1820 in that area. Mrs. Coulson also says of the Old Homestead Cemetery:

> "I had forgotten what a lovely cemetery this is, shaded with many pine and other trees, stone wall around it, and located near the edge of a gully (we have the tree-filled kind of gullies in this area), so there are many trees shading the cemetery."

Elsewhere she has said:

> "Isabel Howland maintained the cemetery in her lifetime and by will set up a trust fund of $3,000 for perpetual care of the cemetery where Jethro is buried."

Miss Isabel Howland, who died in 1942, was the daughter of William and Hannah (Letchworth) Howland, and the granddaughter of Slocum and Hannah (Talcott) Howland.

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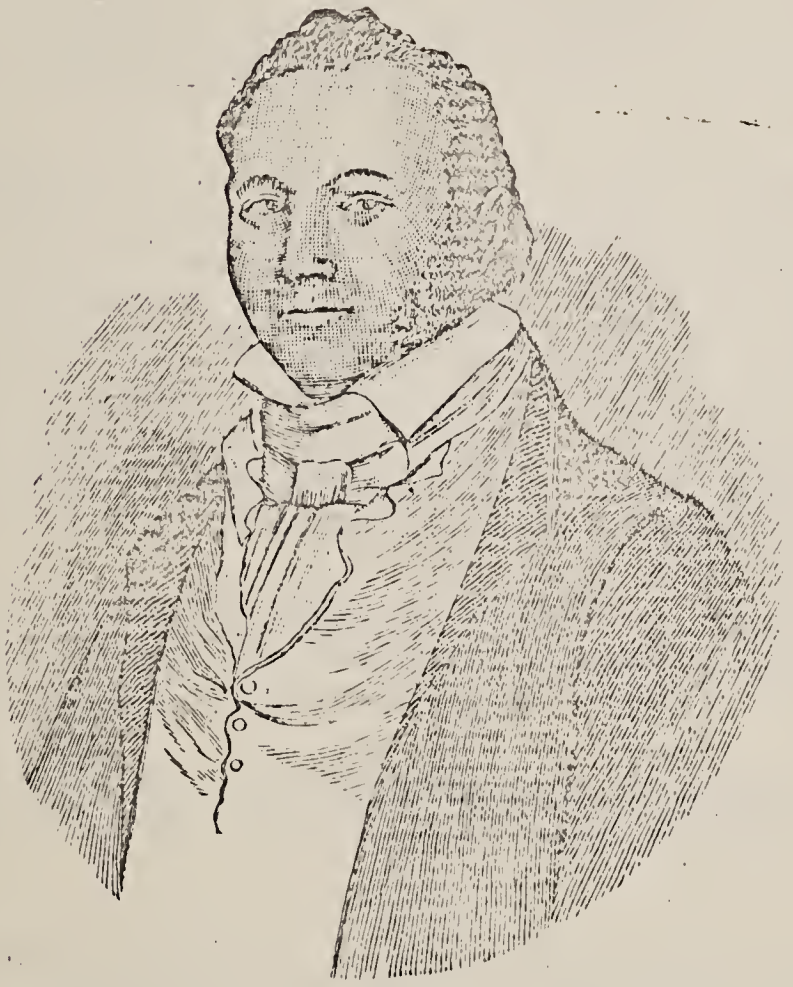
*HISTORY OF CAYUGA COUNTY" by Storke says 1798; BIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW OF CAYUGA COUNTY," etc., says 1794.

Wood p. 9a



JETHRO WOOD.

(By the courtesy of Messrs. Rhodes & McClure, Chicago, publishers of
"Jethro Wood, Inventor of the Modern Plow."
12 mo., p. 72, Chicago, 1882.)

VII. JETHRO WOOD (John[6], John[5], Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1].)

This writer has been unable to locate the official record of Jethro's birth. He was buried in the Old Homestead Cemetery in the Town of Ledyard, east of the Village of Aurora, Cayuga Co., New York (described on the preceding page under John VI) and his tombstone reads:

Jethro Wood
Inventor of the Cast
Iron Plough
Died 28 of 9 Month 1834
Aged 56 Years

This would indicate that he was born in 1778. However, this writer believes "Aged 56 years" to be an error, and that he was born March 16, 1774. All references to his marriage give the year thereof as 1793, and a family paper says "Jethro, at age 19" married Sylvia Howland, which would indicate the year of his birth as 1774. In addition, both JETHRO WOOD, INVENTOR OF THE MODERN PLOW, by Frank Gilbert, and THOMAS' BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY give the year of his birth as 1774.

As to the place of his birth, it would seem probable that he was born in White Creek, Washington County, New York, where his parents are said to have gone from Dartmouth, Bristol County, Massachusetts, after their marriage in 1769 (see John VI above). As has been said above, a search was made in 1962 for the record of his birth but the County Historian of Washington County reported that no vital records were kept in New York State until after 1880, and that no reference to Jethro can be found. However, a family paper states that he was born in Washington County, as does also THOMAS' BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY, where it is said:

> "Wood, (Jethro), distinguished as the inventor of a greatly improved form of the cast-iron plough, was born in Washington County, New York, in 1774," etc.

This writer believes the statement made in JETHRO WOOD, INVENTOR OF THE MODERN PLOW, etc., by Gilbert, that he was born at Dartmouth, Massachusetts, is an error.

Jethro married, on January 1, 1793, Sylvia Howland, daughter of Benjamin* and Mary (Slocum) Howland, originally of Dartmouth, Bristol Col, Massachusetts, but in Saratoga County before settling in Cayuga Co., New York. She was born August 31, 1778, and died in Ledyard, New York, October 4, 1845. (For accounts about the Howland family see: A BRIEF GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF ARTHUR, HENRY AND JOHN HOWLAND AND THEIR DESCENDANTS, OF THE U. S. AND CANADA, by Franklyn Howland (1st edition, New Bedford, Mass., 1885, pub. by the author, Vol. I, and HISTORY OF CAYUGA COUNTY (N. Y.) by Elliott G. Storke, published in Syracuse, N. Y., 1879--both of which are on file in the New York City Public Library.)

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*The record of Benjamin Howland's service in the Revolutionary War, as given in "Revolutionary War Soldiers buried in Cayuga County" by Miss Flora B. Daniels--a manuscript on file in the Syracuse Public Library, is as follows: "Howland, Benjamin, of Ledyard, buried Howland family cemetery. d. Sept. 23, 1831, aged 77. Wife, Mary Slocum, d. Oct. 30, 1840, aged 85. Record of service: Pvt. Capt. George Webb's Company; Col., Wm. Shepard's 3rd Regt. --Muster roll Oct. 1778. Camp at Providence, R. I. Will probated July 31, 1832."

This writer believes that Jethro and Sylvia Howland were married at White Creek, Washington County, New York, because (a) a family paper written by Jethro's grandson, Edward Townsend Wood, so states; (b) Jethro's parents were living in Washington County at the time, Sylvia's in Saratoga County--the two counties being adjacent to one another; and (c) the statement that he was born in Washington County, N. Y., in 1774, also is made in Thomas' Biographical Dictionary.

They were members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), and the next mention we have of them appears in "Historical Sketch of Friends in Cayuga County, New York," by Emily Howland, described on page 8 hereof, where it is said:

> "Returning to our glimpses of some of the characters of those pioneers who reared their roof trees in the forests of the 'Genesee Country,' and first assembled here 'to worship in the silence of all flesh', we find next in order of coming Jethro and Sylvia Wood, who came from Saratoga Co. in 1799. They found a humble home in the woods south of Benjamin Howland's and lived there until the following year, when the parents, John and Dinah Wood, followed with their daughters Anne, Content, Cynthia and Hepsibeth, also their married daughter Hannah Whippo and her husband, James Whippo. John Wood bought 600 acres of land at 3:50 per acre extending from the road running west from Poplar Ridge to the next road on the south."

Jethro and Sylvia (Howland) Wood had six children:

1. John, b. September 10, 1795 (probably in Saratoga Co. --parents living there until 1799.)

2. Benjamin Howland
   m. Helen Ann Townsend, b. Feb. 24, 1797 (ditto)
   SEE BELOW FOR BOTH.

3. Maria, b. April 11, 1801 (b. Town of Ledyard, then town of Scipio, near Aurora in Cayuga Co., N. Y.)
   m. Jeremiah Foote of Indianapolis, Ind.

4. Phebe - d. unmarried (ditto)
   Her tombstone in Old Homestead Cemetery, Town of Ledyard, Cayuga Co., says: b. Jan. 10, 1804--"passed from death into life March 10, 1880."

5. Sarah, b. Jan. 10, 1804 (ditto)
   m. Robert Underhill

6. Sylvia Ann, b. Feb. 12, 1810 (ditto)
   m. Benjamin Gould of Ledyard, Cayuga Co. She was his third wife.

A BRIEF GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF ARTHUR, HENRY AND JOHN HOWLAND AND THEIR DESCENDANTS, etc., by Franklyn Howland, gives the following about Jethro and Sylvia (Howland) Wood and their descendants:

"SYLVIA, b. 31, 8, 1778; d. 4, 10, 1845; m. 1, 1, 1793, Jethro Wood. Had: 1, John, b. 10, 9, 1795; m. Belva Sherwood, and had, 1, Jethro, 2, Julia; 2, Benjamin H., b. 24, 2, 1797, m. Helen A. Townsend, and had, 1, Elizabeth, 2, Sarah G., 3, Edward, 4, Fanny, 5, Albert; 3, Maria, m. Jeremiah Foote, and had, 1, Jethro; 4, Phebe; 5, Sarah, b, 10, 1, 1804, m. Robert Underhill, and had, 1, Phebe, who m. Dr. Updegraph, 2, Frank, 3, John Wood, 4, _____, 5, Sarah, 6, Mary, 7, Ann, 8, William; 6, Sylvia Ann, b. 12, 2, 1810, m. Benjamin Gould, of Ledyard, Cayuga co., N. Y. (Mention of Jethro Wood will be made in the Appendix.)"

Jethro Wood was a man of considerable note in his day, and there are many records relating to him and his family in the town of Ledyard, Cayuga County, New York, where the Wood and Howland names are honored to this day.

Jethro was the inventor of the cast iron plow, the story of which is told in the pamphlets following page 17 hereof, and in the book "JETHRO WOOD, INVENTOR OF THE MODERN PLOW--A brief Account of his life, services and trials; together with facts subsequent to his death and incident to his great invention," by Frank Gilbert, Chicago; Rhodes & McClure, 1882. Copies of this book are on file with the County Historian of Cayuga County, Aurora, New York, at the Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and at the Boston Public Library, Boston, Mass. The following quotation of a statement made by William H. Seward is taken from the Gilbert book:

"No citizen of the United States has conferred greater benefits on his country than Jethro Wood--none of her benefactors have been more inadequately rewarded."

William H. Seward (1801-1872) was a lawyer, and was Secretary of State under Abraham Lincoln. His home was in Auburn, New York, and is preserved as a museum there today.

Jethro Wood's home in the town of Ledyard, just east of Aurora, on the Poplar Ridge-Aurora Road still is standing, occupied and in good condition in 1962 and is identified by a state historical marker erected by the State Education Department in 1932, reading:

"Home of Jethro Wood, inventor of the cast iron plough."

At a crossroads in Poplar Ridge there also is a state marker erected in 1932 reading:

"Site of First Store built about 1800 by Jethro Wood, inventor. Present store built from some of the original timbers."

It is said in the Gilbert book that Jethro Wood was:

"Born in comparative affluence, blessed with a good education, an ample library and a well equipped workshop, enjoying the correspondence of such men as Thomas Jefferson and David Thomas, he was unremitting in his endeavor to realize his ideal."

It also is said in the Gilbert book:

"Jethro Wood took out two plow patents. The first patent was issued in 1814. The second patent dates from 1819. The natal day of the modern plow may be fairly set down as Sep. 1, 1819."

There is a New York State Historical Marker, erected by the State Education Department in 1932, in Montville, near Moravia, Cayuga County, N. Y., on State Route 38-A, reading:

> "First cast iron plow in the world was made by Jethro Wood at foot of falls. 1819."

The sign is by a small bridge over a stream that drops in a falls just west of the road.

Also, on the wall of the Moravia, New York, Post Office, there is a cast iron plaque depicting Jethro Wood standing, and a workman kneeling beside a model of the plow. The plaque is approximately 4 or 5 feet long, and about 4 feet high, and bears the inscription:

> "IN MORAVIA IN 1819 JETHRO WOOD MADE
> THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL ALL-METAL PLOW.
> Kenneth Washburn, 194_?"

In the pamphlet entitled "A Plain Statement of Facts," (following p. 17 hereof) it is said:

> "The nearest furnace was thirty miles from his (Jethro's) home, and baffled by obstacles which unskillful and disobliging workmen threw in his way, he visited it day after day, directing the making of his patterns, standing by the furnace while the metal was melting, and often with his own hands aiding in the casting."

Jethro devoted the remainder of his life to matters relating to the plow. Much of the interesting story is given in the pamphlets included herewith following page 17 so will not be repeated here. He died September 28, 1834, on his farm in the town of Ledyard just east of Aurora, referred to in his will as "my homestead farm, 250 acres in Ledyard,"--perhaps part of the 600 acre tract originally purchased by his father, John VI, when he settled in Cayuga County in 1799.

Jethro's will was dated September 10, 1834, and was probated October 28, 1834. It is on file in the Surrogate's office, Auburn, Cayuga County. It mentions his wife, Sylvia, of Ledyard; Benjamin H. Wood*; John Wood of Ledyard; Maria, wife of Jeremiah Foote of Oneonta, Otsego Co., New York; Phebe Wood, of Ledyard; Sarah, wife of Robert R. Underhill of Ledyard, and Ann Wood of Ledyard. Also referred to in his will is his "real estate in Montezuma and on the island." Montezuma is a township in the northwestern part of Cayuga County, and the island is Howland's Island in the Seneca River, named for the Howland family. The island is a game and wildlife preserve today.

Congress had renewed the patent for the plow in 1833 for 14 years. After his death in 1834 his son Benjamin inherited the problems relating to the plow and its patents, which, as also will be seen in the pamphlets following, were so great that while on a visit to Washington, D. C., on the matter he collapsed and died in the White House February 28, 1846, at the age of 49. The patent expired in 1847.

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*The petition for probate of the will says "Benjamin Wood, of Bath."

It is said that:

> "On settling the estate, it was found that while not a vestige remained of the large fortune owned by Jethro Wood when he began his career, less than five hundred and fifty dollars had ever been received from his invention." (Gilbert)

Jethro's widow, Sylvia (Howland) Wood, lived eleven years after his death--on the farm at Ledyard, and died October 4, 1845. See page 16 hereof for a letter from her son Benjamin to his son Edward telling the latter of her death. They both are buried in the Old Homestead Cemetery just east of the village of Aurora in the town of Ledyard, the property for which was given by Benjamin Howland when he settled in Ledyard in 1798. A full description of the cemetery is given under John Wood VI on page 9 hereof.

The Gilbert book says of Jethro:

> "In private life Jethro Wood was a model man. If he had faults it is impossible to ascertain them, for it would seem, from the concurrent testimony of all who were acquainted with him, that 'None knew him but to love him, None named him but to praise.' Nature had endowed him richly in every way, and no gift had been abused. Physically, his was the highest type of manly beauty. Six feet and two inches in height, perfect in proportion, courtly in manner, his presence was worthy his character."

US15693.91.15

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FROM
Hon. Charles Sumner

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Myers, Leonard
1870, Sept. 12, Gift of
Hon. Chas. Sumner
of Boston (H. U. 1830)
U. S. 15693.91.15

THE BILL

FOR

Relief of the Heirs of Jethro Wood.

REMARKS OF HON. L. MYERS.

In the House, Mr. MYERS, from the Committee on Patents, reported House Bill No. 2360, for the relief of the heirs of Jethro Wood, and accompanied with a report, which was read by the Clerk.

Subsequently the rules were suspended on a yea and nay vote, and the bill passed by the House; whereupon, on leave, the following remarks were made by Mr. MYERS as to

THE MERITS OF THIS CASE.

Mr. SPEAKER: As the rules of the House precluded debate upon the bill just passed, I desire now to place on record my views favoring the measure which has just been passed by such a decided vote.

Mr. Wood was a citizen of New York, but his fame belongs to the American people. Eli Whitney's cotton gin did not bring such immediate benefits to the country as did Jethro Wood's modern plow. The useful results of his genius may properly be placed in the scale with those produced by Robert Fulton. Like Fulton, and like Whitney, Jethro Wood died unrewarded. He spent a handsome fortune in introducing his invention, which every agriculturist now finds indispensable, and has left a large family unprovided for. We propose to do what Congress did in 1846 for the heirs of Fulton—to pass a bill for the partial relief of his family, while we recog-

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nize, as representatives, that the people are grateful for benefits conferred. But there is another reason why a bill of this kind is peculiarly appropriate. The Constitution contemplates a reward to inventors, by grants of the exclusive right to their inventions; yet the acts passed by Congress were at first so defective, that when publicity was almost requisite in order to introduce an invention like Wood's, he lost by that publicity the very benefits which the Constitution intended to give him. It was not until 1839 that Congress gave an inventor two years before application for a patent, to test his invention, without forfeiting his right thereto; and it was not until 1842 that the law gave the right to patent the principal feature of an invention like that of Wood's, viz: the shape or configuration of the mould-board. Congress felt that injustice had been done to Jethro Wood in these respects.

In the Senate, bills passed for the relief of his daughters. One of these gave a royalty of 25 cents for each plow made under his patent. Small as this cost would have been to the farmers, it must have paid the heirs handsomely, for we have two millions of cultivators of the soil. There are 500 plow manufacturers in the country, and they make over 200,000 plows annually, which would have given $50,000 annually to the deserving family.

When we remember that this invention reduced the cost from $30 or $25 to $10 a plow—when we think of the expense necessary and the great loss of time for repairs to the old wooden or "Bull" plow or the Rotherham plow formerly used, with badly-formed mould-board and its undetachable wrought-iron share, compared to the cast-iron adjustable and well-shaped parts of that of Jethro Wood, and its cast-steel and other improvements, it might seem that every farmer in the land would have been glad to pay for its important results the sum of 25 cents per plow; but while approving of an appropriation of money, they insisted that the patent had expired, and the House of Representatives refused on several occasions to pass the Senate bills for its extension. The feeling, however, that justice in some way should be done these heirs has on many occasions found expression in the public prints, through legislative and other bodies, and particularly among the agriculturists of the country. I have before me the petition of the executive committee of the Agricultural Society of New York, asking Congress to grant these heirs a remuneration because of Jethro Wood's eminent services in the cause of agriculture. Here, also, is the petition of the New York legislature of some years ago making a like request.

Our own Agricultural Report of 1866 states that—

"Although Mr. Wood was one of the greatest benefactors of mankind by his admirable invention, he never received for all his thought, anxiety, perplexity and expense a sum of money sufficient to defray the expenses of a decent burial."

An article in the "American Artisan" of 1868 says:

"There seems to be a sad parallel between the story of Samuel Crompton, living a life of poverty while his improvements in spinning machinery whirred in all the cotton factories of England, and the bitter trials of Jethro Wood, while all the broad fields of his native land owned the benefits of his genius."

Mr. Brainerd, examiner of agricultural implements in the Patent Office, in a letter dated April 13, 1870, writes:

"Jethro Wood's plow I believe to be the first in which the parts most liable to wear could be replaced in the field, with no other expense than the price of the casting. In this particular alone the invention is priceless. His form of mould-board is another feature of great importance; a feature that has in one form or another been incorporated into numbers of the more modern improvements in plows. In short, I can say that there is scarcely a plow now manufactured that does not embrace in its structure

the leading features brought to the notice of the public by the patient and persistent efforts and skill of Jethro Wood."

I should tire by attempting to quote the many requests that have been submitted to the Committee on Patents that justice shall be done to the family of this meritorious inventor, and will conclude these references by reading what the Hon William H. Seward expresses in a letter on the subject:

"I am fully satisfied that no citizen of the United States has conferred greater economical benefits on his country than Jethro Wood; none of her benefactors have been more inadequately rewarded; none has left a poorer or better or more helpless family to appeal to her justice and gratitude."

I am happy to say they have not appealed in vain. Other countries have frequently rewarded those whose genius added to the fame and wealth of the people. The occasions for our doing such justice by special enactment are and must ever be rare; for under our liberal laws the utmost protection is now afforded.

The nation rejoices that, thus aided, men like Morse, Hoe, Goodyear, Howe and hosts of others, pioneers in science and art, have won substantial rewards as well as honor; contemplating with regret that the defects of an earlier patent system prevented a few industrious men from reaping like results, we respond to the wishes of the people that their gratitude may be evinced to Jethro Wood by the bill we have passed to relieve his deserving family.

1870, Sept. 12.
Hon. Chas. Sumner,
Boston. (H. U. 1830.)

A PLAIN STATEMENT OF FACTS

IN RELATION TO THE

APPLICATION FOR REMUNERATION

BY THE

HEIRS OF JETHRO WOOD.

To the Senate and House of Representatives
in Congress assembled:

In order that the committee and Congress may fully understand the merits of this case, it becomes necessary to state who the applicants are, what their claim is, and its basis.

The petition in this case was presented last session, asking for a grant of lands, and was referred to the Committee on Public Lands, who, after investigating the matter fully, have reported strongly in favor of the justice of the claim, but are of the opinion that the subject belongs more properly to the Committee of Claims; hence its reference to them.

THE PETITIONERS

are four Quaker ladies, daughters of Jethro Wood, deceased—two of them unmarried, and the other two *widows*—all of them grown, and living in poverty, without a living male protector.

THEIR CLAIM

is for national benefits conferred by their father by the invention and introduction of the iron plough, he having devoted his life and his fortune to that object; and though successful in conferring this great benefit on the country, he died poor, and left his family in want. This claim rests on that moral basis which recognizes as a public benefactor that man who makes two blades of grass to grow where but one grew before. In order that his services and efforts in this matter may be understood, the following statement of facts is submitted:

It is not claimed that he was the first to make a plough of any kind, for the plough is as old as civilization; but it is admitted that he was the first to invent, reduce to practice, and successfully introduce the modern iron plough—that instrument which, more than all others, has tended to make our country "the granary of the world." The plough of olden times was little more than a crotched

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Wood, Jethro
1870, Sept. 12.
Gift of
Hon. Chas. Sumner, of Boston (H. U. 1830)
U. S. 15693.91.10

stick, with one point sharpened to run in the ground, the other serving as a beam. This wooden plough, exactly as it was among the Israelites and Egyptians, is in existence still in some portions of the world.

Until after the revolution, the history of agricultural implements in this country was nearly the same as in England, except that the colonists labored under much greater disadvantages, in consequence of the absence of manufacturing facilities, which it was the fixed policy of England to discourage, it being considered a great feat, at the close of the revolution, to be able to cast an ordinary iron pot in this country! In 1797, Newbold, in this country, made some improvements in ploughs, but they were not important, and his ploughs never came into use to any considerable extent.

So important were improvements in ploughs considered that the versatile and philosophic Jefferson was greatly interested in them, and in 1798 he wrote a long, elaborate treatise on the construction of mould-boards. His theory was, that as the bottom of the furrow is, or ought to be flat, the breast of the mould-board where it comes in direct contact with the soil should be flat also. But the plough still continued in a very imperfect state. As late as 1820, according to the testimony of old farmers now living, the kind best known and most commonly used bore the name of the "Bull-plough." It was made principally of wood and wrought iron, and ordinarily cost $40 or $50. The mould-board was of wood fitted bunglingly to the irons, and the action of the rude implement "might be illustrated by holding a sharp-pointed shovel, back up, and thrusting it through the ground." The share was of steel, and frequently had to be sharpened by a blacksmith at a charge of from ten to twenty shillings. The ploughing season, especially where land was stony, proved very expensive to the husbandman.

In 1814, Jethro Wood, a farmer of ample means and large intelligence, living in Cayuga county, New York, took out a patent for an improved plough. From early childhood he had shown remarkable ingenuity in the construction of agricultural implements. When only a few years old he moulded a little plough from metal, which he obtained by melting a pewter cup. Then, cutting the buckles from a set of braces, he made a miniature harness, with which he fastened the family cat to his tiny plough, and endeavored to drive her about the flower-garden. The good old-fashioned whipping he received for this "mischief" was such as to drive all desire for repeating the experiment out of his juvenile head.

But when he grew to manhood the ruling passion asserted itself, and for years the improvement of the plough was his darling project. His chief desire was to invent a new mould-board, which from its form should meet the least resistance from the soil, and which could be made with share and standard entirely of cast-iron. To hit upon the exact shape for the mould-board he whittled away, day after day, until his neighbors, who thought him mad on the subject, gave him the

soubriquet of the "whittling Yankee." His custom was to take a large oblong potato, which was easy for the knife, and cut it till he obtained what he fancied was the exact curve.

The plough which he patented in 1814 he found defective; and, destroying his first patterns, he set to work again. In 1819 he took out a patent for his perfected plough. It covered five distinct improvements: 1. The new shape of the mould-board, to raise and turn the soil with the least resistance. 2. The cast-iron standard, which is a projection from the mould-board, connecting it with the beam. 3. The cast-iron edge or share, and the manner of attaching it to the upper side of the mould-board. 4. The fastening of the handles to the land-side and mould-board by notches or loops, cast with the land-side and mould-board respectively. 5. The manner of connecting the land-side and mould-board without the aid of screw-bolts.

He immediately began to manufacture his ploughs, and introduce them to the farmers in his neighborhood. The difficulties which he now encountered would have daunted any man without extraordinary perseverance and a firm belief in the inestimable benefit to agriculture sure to result from his invention. He was obliged to manufacture all the patterns, and to have the plough cast under the disadvantages usual with new machinery. The nearest furnace was thirty miles from his home, and baffled by obstacles which unskillful and disobliging workmen threw in his way, he visited it day after day, directing the making of his patterns, standing by the furnace while the metal was melting, and often with his own hands aiding in the casting.

When at length samples of his plough were ready for use, he met with another difficulty in the unwillingness of farmers to accept them. "What," they cried in contempt, "a plough made of pot metal? You might as well attempt to turn up the earth with a glass ploughshare. It would hardly be more brittle."

One day he induced one of his most skeptical neighbors to make a public trial of the plough. A large concourse gathered to see how it would work. The field selected for the test was thickly strewn with stones, many of them firmly imbedded in the soil, and jutting up from the surface. All predicted that the plough would break at the outset. To their astonishment, and Wood's satisfaction, it went around the field, running easily and smoothly, and turning up the most perfect furrow which had ever been seen. The small stones against which the farmer maliciously guided it, to test the "brittle" metal, moved out of the way as if they were grains of sand, and it slid around the immovable rocks as if they were icebergs.

Incensed at the non-fulfilment of his prophecy, the farmer finally drove the plough will all his force upon a large boulder, and found to his amazement that it was uninjured by the collision. It proved a day of triumph for Jethro Wood, and from that time he heard few taunts about the "pot metal."

It was soon discovered that his plough turned up the soil with so much ease that two horses could do the work for which a yoke of

oxen and a span of horses had sometimes been insufficient before; that it made a better furrow, and that it could be bought for seven or eight dollars. No more running to the blacksmith, either, to have it sharpened. It was proved a thorough and valuable success. Thomas Jefferson, from his retirement at Monticello, wrote Wood a letter of congratulation, and although his theory of the construction of mould-boards had differed entirely from the inventor's, gave his most hearty appreciation to the merits of the new plough. During the same year, 1820, Jethro Wood sent one of his ploughs to Alexander I, Emperor of Russia, and the peculiar circumstances attending the gift and its reception formed a large part of the newspaper gossip of the day. Wood, though a man of cultivation, intellectually as well as agriculturally, was not familiar with French, which was then, as now, the diplomatic language. So he requested his personal friend, Dr. Samuel Mitchill, president of the New York Society of Natural History and Sciences, to write a letter in French to accompany the gift.

The autocrat of all the Russias received the plough and the letter, and sent back a diamond ring—which the newspapers declared to be worth from $7,000 to $15,000—in token of his appreciation. By some indirection, the ring was not delivered to the donor of the plough, but to the writer of the letter, and Dr. Mitchill instantly appropriated it to his own use. Wood appealed to the Russian Minister at Washington for redress. The Minister sent to his Emperor and asked to whom the ring belonged, and Alexander replied that it was intended for the inventor of the plough. Armed with this authority, Wood again demanded the ring of Mitchill. But there were no steamships or telegraphs in those days, and Mitchill declared that in the long interval in which they had been waiting to hear from Russia he had given it to the cause of the Greeks, who were then rising to throw off the yoke of their Turkish oppressors. A newspaper of the time calls Mitchill's course "an ingenious mode of quartering on the enemy," and the inventor's friends seem to have believed that the ring had been privately sold for his benefit. At all events, it never came to light again, and Wood, a peaceful man, a Quaker by profession, did not push the matter further.

In truth, he had little time to devote to side issues. His patterns had cost him some thousands of dollars. For the first year or two he had *given away* his ploughs to the farmers in all directions, that their value might be thoroughly tested. Now, when he began to look around for some benefit to accrue to himself, he found the plough-makers everywhere manufacturing them, in defiance of his rights as patentee and inventor. In fruitless suits and vain struggles against the inefficacy of the laws, the fourteen years for which the first patent was granted expired.

But, in 1833, he succeeded in getting a renewal for 14 years more. In the meantime, however, he had spent a large private fortune, and become heavily involved. His invention had brought him literally nothing but a plentiful crop of law suits, which seemed to spring up

in every furrow his plough had traced. In 1834 he died, pecuniarily ruined.

His son Benjamin, who was appointed his executor, took the matter up where his father left it, but finding that it was impossible, under the then defective patent laws, to protect the invention, he came to Washington, and with the aid of such men as Clay, Webster, and John Quincy Adams, succeeded in procuring the passage of the act of August 29, 1842, which was the origin of our present law of design patents, and under which alone he was able to protect the principal feature of the invention—*the form or configuration of the mould-board.*

Then he returned to New York and commenced suit to resist encroachments on his right, and the wholesale manufacture of his plough by those who refused to pay the premium to the inventor. The "Iron Plough" was now used all over the country, and formidable combinations of its manufacturers united their capital and influence against Benjamin Wood. William H. Seward, then practising law, was retained as Wood's counsel, and the plough-makers engaged all the talent they could muster to oppose him.

Heretofore it had never been contradicted that Jethro Wood was the originator of the plough in use, but now his right to the invention was denied, and it was alleged that his improvements had been forestalled by other makers. Again and again the case was adjourned, and Europe and America were ransacked for specimens of the different ploughs which were declared to include his patent.

Wood also obtained from England samples of the ploughs of James Small and Robert Ransom. He searched New Jersey to find the Peacock plough, which was said to have a cast-iron mould-board of exactly similar shape to his father's. Everywhere in that State he found "Wood's plough" in use, but he could hear nothing of the one he sought. At length, riding near a farm-house, he discovered one of the old "Newbold-Peacock ploughs" lying under a fence, dilapidated and rust-eaten. "We don't use it any more," the farmer replied to his inquiries; "we've got one a good deal better." "Will you sell this?" asked Wood. "Well, yes." And Wood, glad to get it at almost any price, paid the keen farmer, who took advantage of his evident anxiety, two or three times the price of a new plough, and added the old one to his specimens.

This motley collection of implements was brought into court and exhibited to the judges. At last, after the case had dragged its slow length along through many terms, and the plaintiff was nearly worn out with the law's delay, the time for final trial and decision arrived. The combination of plough-makers feared that the case would go in Wood's favor, and made every effort to keep him out of court that he might lose it by default. During his long entanglement in the law he had contracted many debts, and one of his opponents had managed to purchase several of these accounts. Just before the case was to be heard, for the last time, this worthy plough manufacturer, attended

by a sheriff, and armed with a warrant to arrest Wood for debt, appeared at the front door of his house. Fortunately, Wood had had a few minutes warning, and, slipping out at the back door, he made his way, under cover of approaching darkness, to the house of a friendly neighbor. There he procured a horse, and started for Albany, 150 miles distant, hearing every moment, in fancy, the clattering of hoofs at his heels.

As if fortune could not be sufficiently ill-natured, his horse proved vicious and unmanageable, and thrice in the tedious journey threw the rider from his saddle upon the frozen earth, so injuring him that he was barely able to go on.

On arriving at Albany he found himself not a moment too soon. The case had an immediate hearing, and after three days' trial, Justice Wilson, of the Supreme Court, decided unequivocally that the plough now in general use over the country was unlike any other which had been produced; that the improvements which rendered it so effective were due to Jethro Wood, and that all manufacturers must pay his heirs for the privilege of making it.

This was a great triumph, but it was now the late autumn of 1845, and the last grant of the patent had little more than a year to run. Wood again repaired to Washington to apply for a new extension, but the excitements of so long a contest had been too much for him. Just as he had recommenced his efforts they were forever ended. While talking with one of his friends, he suddenly fell dead from heart disease, and the patent expired without renewal.

The last male heir to the invention was no more. On settling the estate, it was found that while not a vestige remained of the large fortune owned by Jethro Wood when he began his career, *less than five hundred and fifty dollars had ever been received from his invention.*

The after history of the case is a brief one. Four daughters of Jethro Wood alone remained to represent the family. In the winter of 1848 the two younger sisters went to Washington to petition Congress that a bill might be passed for their relief, in view of the inestimable services of their father to the agricultural interests of the country. Webster declared that he regarded their father as a "public benefactor," and gave them his most efficient aid; Clay warmly espoused their cause, and the venerable John Quincy Adams, with his trembling hand—then so enfeebled by age that he rarely used the pen—wrote them kind notes, heartily sympathizing with them. On one memorable day, while they were in the House gallery, Mr. Adams, at his desk on the floor, wrote them briefly in relation to their case. A few minutes later he was struck with the fatal attack under which he exclaimed, "This is the last of earth; I am content," and was borne dying to the Speaker's room. The tremulous lines, the last his hands ever traced, were found on his desk and delivered to Miss Wood.

A bill providing that in these four heirs should rest for seven years

the exclusive right of making and vending the improvements in the construction of the cast-iron plough, and that twenty-five cents on each plough might be exacted from all who manufactured it, passed the Senate unanimously. But Washington already swarmed with plough manufacturers. The city of Pittsburg alone sent five to look after their interests. Money was freely used, and the members of the House Committee who were to report on the bill were assured that during the twenty-eight years of the patent Wood's family had reaped immense wealth, and wished to keep up a monopoly. The two quiet ladies, fresh from the retirement of a Quaker home, where they had learned little of the world, were even accused of attempting to secure its extension through bribery. It was the wolf charging the lamb with riling the water. So ignorant were they of such means, that though the chairman of the committee plainly told the younger lady, in a few words of private conversation, that a very few thousand dollars would give her a favorable verdict, she did not understand the suggestion till an unfavorable report was presented, and the bill killed in the House.

When they were about to leave Washington, some friendly members of Congress advised them to deposit the valuable documents which had been used in their suit, including a letter from Thomas Jefferson to Jethro Wood, in the archives of the House, where they could only be withdrawn on the motion of some member. They did so, and left them for some years uncalled for. When at last they applied for them they could not be found. Nor from that time to the present has any trace of them been discovered by any of the family.

Such, in brief, is the history of this remarkable case. Jethro Wood conferred on his country far more lasting benefits than many to whom it has given wealth and fame. His invention is in universal use throughout the length and breadth of the land; but his few surviving heirs are living in obscurity and poverty, having bitterly learned the lesson that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE INVENTION.

No one can deny that the inventions which have lessened the price of the plough and the difficulty and expense of running it, and brought it to its present perfection, rank in importance with those which have given us the steamboat and locomotive. To improve the plough was to improve the value of every acre of land in the country. To reduce the cost of working it was to reduce the cost of every bushel of grain grown in the country.

Wm. H. Seward, (then United States Senator,) says under date of November 20, 1848: "I am fully satisfied that no citizen of the United States has conferred greater economical benefit on his country than Jethro Wood; none of her benefactors have been more inadequately rewarded."

David Thomas, for many years chief engineer of the New York canals, and who was personally acquainted with the efforts of Jethro

Wood, from the commencement to the close of his life, furnishes the following testimony: "The exercise of mind and amount of labor to perfect these improvements can scarcely be appreciated by those who have not been engaged in similar pursuits. It was a new field, and everything had to be learned by experiments. To discover and procure the best material for patterns, and to prepare them, employed him a long time, and a common mind would have shrunk from the difficulties that met him at foundries; oftentimes he had to overcome the unskillfulness or prejudice of moulders by presents, or by showing them how to manage, with his own hands.

"I am satisfied that all his patented improvements were inventions of his own, originating in his own mind, and to avoid encroaching on what others had invented, he had every volume within his reach that treated of ploughs, including several Encyclopædias, carefully examined for that purpose.

"To Jethro Wood's name belongs the honor of rendering the plough that cheap and efficient instrument that we now find it, truly enabling us to cultivate our fields at less than one-fourth of the former expense, and saving millions to the country."

Samuel Stevens, of Albany, says, under date of January 8, 1848, "I am satisfied that neither he nor his children have realized anything from that patent; so far as my humble opinion can have any weight, I think there never was a case in which the children of a public benefactor have such strong claims to be secured by the prolongation of a patent, or to receive some remuneration for the mental labor of their ancestor."

Daniel Webster, under date of December 28, 1849, says, "I regard Jethro Wood as a public benefactor, and I would unite in any proper measure for the benefit of his family."

The Senate committee to whom their petition was referred, in 1848, concluded their report in these words:

"The committee are unanimously of the opinion that this was one of the most useful inventions of the age—perhaps after the steam-engine and the cotton-gin, the most valuable one then made, considering the quality, cheapness, and durability of the plough, and its general use in all parts of the country, and are satisfied that, owing to the causes before mentioned, no adequte return has been made to said Wood or his heirs (now in indigent circumstances) for the benefits his invention has conferred upon the country, and it is manifestly right and just in this case that this should in some way be done, and they, therefore, report a bill for that purpose, and recommend its passage."

Thus was established the national value and importance of Jethro Wood's labors. All this was the result of his genius, his efforts, and energy; and for the national benefits thus conferred, at the expense of his own and his children's substance, he has received, what? Let the official records of your departments answer. Says the Commissioner of Agriculture, in his report for 1866, p. 241:

"Although Wood was one of the greatest public benefactors to

mankind by his admirable invention, *he never received for all his thought, anxiety, and expense, a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of his decent burial!*"

Both father and son died in the effort to obtain some recognition of their rights; the latter in this city, away from home and among strangers, and to-day his remains rest in yonder Congressional Cemetery, while the only surviving members of the family, alone and defenceless, stand here begging of Congress a mere trifle of that which is their just due. Shall they not have it, in view of

WHAT CONGRESS HAS DONE FOR OTHER INVENTORS?

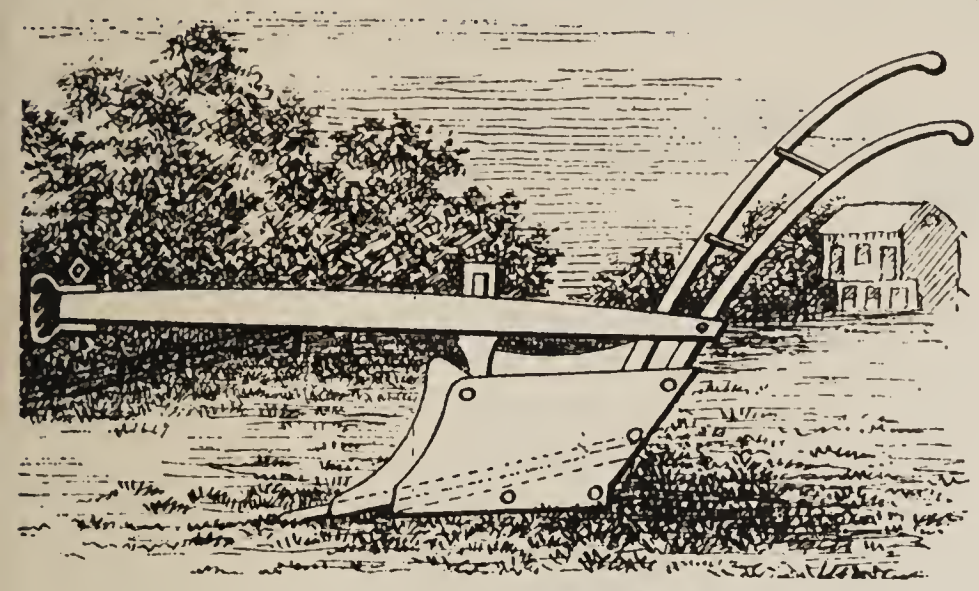
Congress appropriated to Major Bell $20,000 for his invention of *a lock for cannon*. Mr. Wright, an employee at the arsenal, has also been paid several thousand dollars for improvements in a bullet or cap machine; and Congress, in 1846, appropriated $25,000 to Joshua Shaw, *an Englishman*, for his invention of the *gun cap*.

Other nations have been far more liberal to their inventors. Without mentioning the hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling, besides titles of nobility conferred upon such men as Armstrong and Whitworth for their cannon, she gave to Col. Boxer $25,000 for his improvement in fuzes; to Maj. Palliser, for his chilled shot, $50,000, with the promise of more; to Col. James, the rank and honor of knighthood, for the *accidental* discovery of improvements in photolithography, and to Mr. Osborne, *for the same invention*, $5,000, with an increase of $500 per annum to his salary—all of these parties being at the time in the Government employ at large salaries. More recently, England has given to the widow of Mr. Sneider, the *American inventor* of the Sneider alteration of the Enfield rifle, the sum of $50,000, in addition to $10,000 previously given to Mr. Sneider himself. Is America less generous, less willing, or less able to compensate its benefactors? *Your action in this case must give the answer.*

FOR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 1951

YOUR AMERICA Day by Day® IN PICTURES

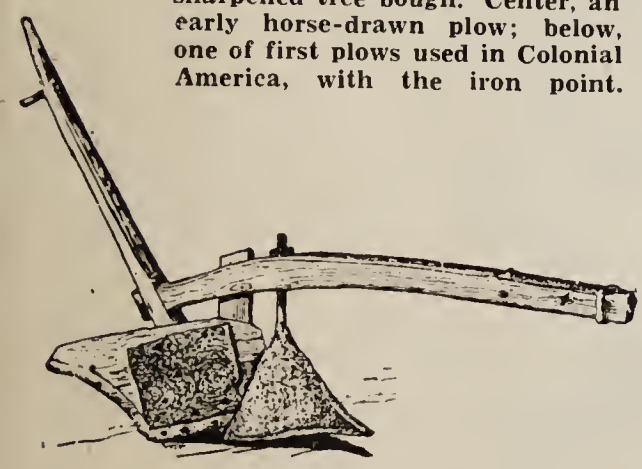
An ALBUM OF UNITED STATES HISTORY edited for schools by Clark Kinnaird

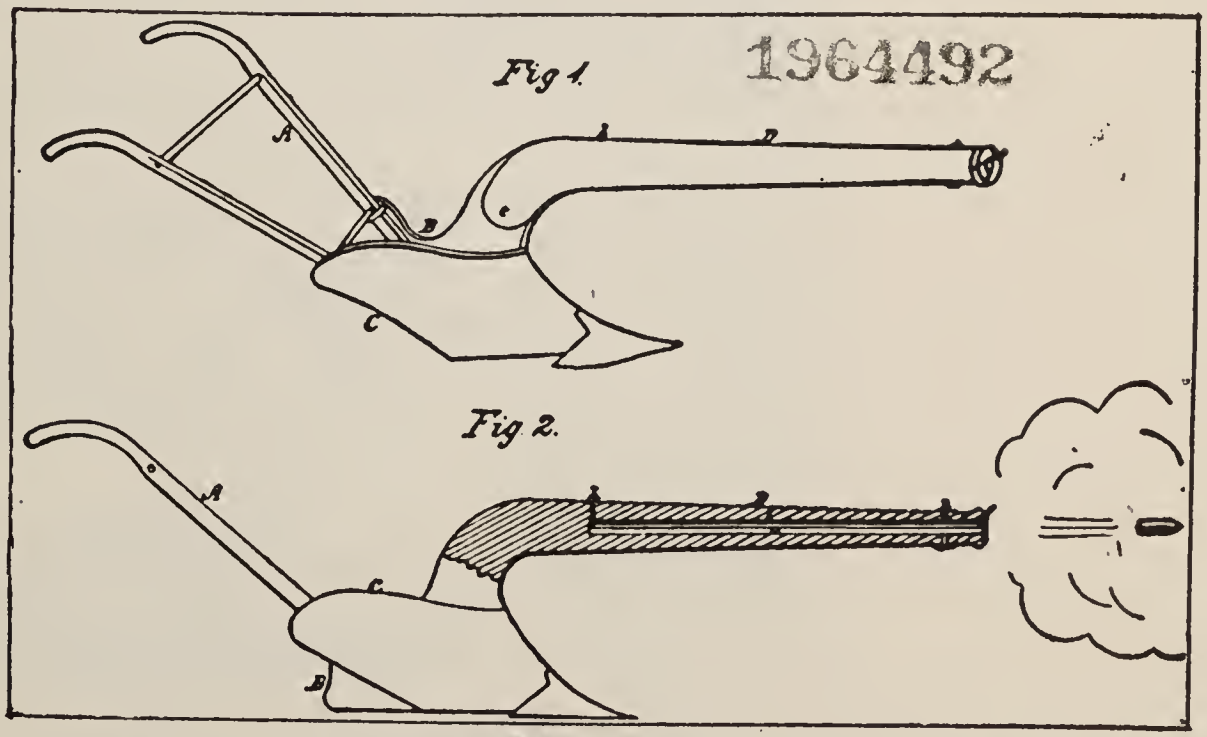


Above: John Jethro Wood's adjustable plow-point plow, patented in 1819, from Butterworth's history of American invention, "Growth of Industrial Art." While it was a big step forward in agriculture, it was replaced in another generation by steel plows.

132 YEARS AGO this month, Sept 1, 1819, a patent was granted on the first plow with interchangeable parts to one of our great agricultural pioneers, John Jethro Wood of Poplar Ridge, New York State. His plow substituted cast-iron for the wooden moldboard, landslide and standard of plows then in common use. He was not the first American to devise a cast-iron plow. A few years before, Charles Newbold, of Burlington county, New Jersey, introduced one. Some of the farmers Newbold tried to induce to use it were hostile because of a belief that the iron would poison the ground so that crops would not grow. Others had a valid objection. It was too heavy, and inasmuch as the share, moldboard and landslide were cast in one piece, breaking of any of these meant replacing the whole plow. Wood's plow represented a notable improvement because he made it his task to design a light plow that would offer the least resistance to the soil while giving the greatest efficiency. This was of prime importance on the frontier, where draft animals were scarce and heavy sodbreaking and plowing in rough soil had to be done. Under Wood's hands, the plow began to assume its modern form. The principle of interchangeable parts embodied in his plow marked another important step for it saved precious time and money for the frontier farmer whose plowshare was broken or dulled. As L. G. Powers pointed out in his *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture,* the pioneers of this country expended a great portion of their labor in opening the land to agriculture. "For every day's labor expended before 1800 in the growing of crops, it is very probable that one or two others were utilized in cutting down the forests, clearing away the stones, building houses, barns and fences, breaking up the sod, opening roads, constructing bridges, and, in short, mastering the wilderness. With agricultural labor thus employed, the harvests for a long time barely sufficed to feed and clothe the farm population." This did not begin to be a land of plenty until the introduction of improved, labor-saving machinery by Wood and other fruitful tinkerers.

In these three pictures you see evolution of the plow before Wood. Top, the earliest soil-breaker, a sharpened tree bough. Center, an early horse-drawn plow; below, one of first plows used in Colonial America, with the iron point.





Of hundreds of plow patents granted since Wood's this is the oddest. Patent No. 35,600 was granted for an "improvement" embodying a combined plow and cannon, in 1862. The inventor obviously thought of the old phrase, "beating swords into plowshares," literally. At left: Pioneer breaking land with a colonial plow drawn by the commonest draft animals then—oxen.

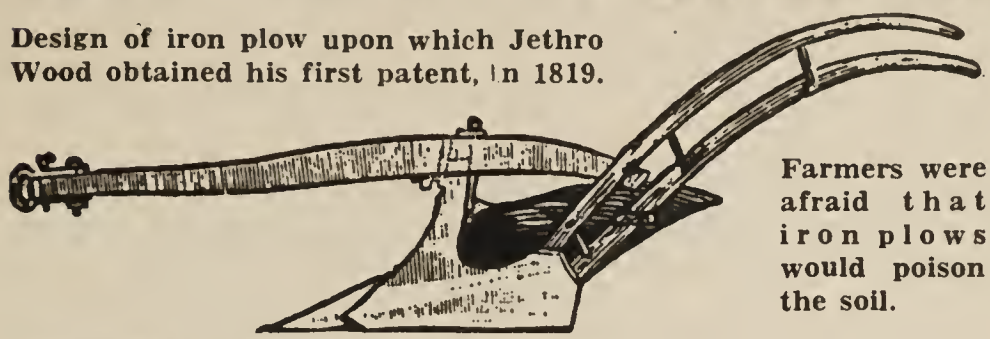
In addressing questions on history to Mr. Kinnaird, please enclose stamped, addressed envelope. Text and presentation copyright, 1951, King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Clip the daily instalments of this pictorial history of America; you'll want a complete scrapbook of them.

FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 1956

Your America® Day-by-Day

By Clark Kinnaird



Design of iron plow upon which Jethro Wood obtained his first patent, in 1819.

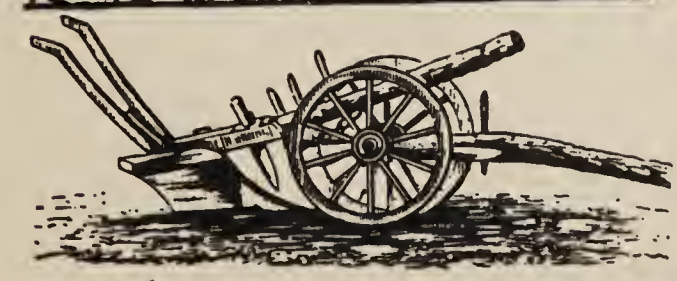
Farmers were afraid that iron plows would poison the soil.

TWO GREAT BENEFACTORS of farmers bore the appropriate Biblical given name Jethro. Jethro Tull, Englishman, initiated the system of sowing in spaced rows, to permit efficient cultivation by hoe or machine. When farm hands grumbled about this laborious system of planting (for thousands of years man had been broadcasting seed by hand), Tull evolved a seed drill. He got the idea for this mechanical planter from his church's organ.

Jethro Wood, born 182 years ago this week (March 16, 1774) in Dartmouth, Mass.) invented a revolutionary plow. Through experimental tests of many shapes of shares, he evolved the stubble or pulverizing plow that was adopted everywhere as fast as its advantages became apparent. Wood assembled this plow of separate iron pieces so that a broken share or mouldboard could be replaced.

See p. 10 hereof

When farmers were convinced that the new plow was superior to the plows then in common use, Wood could not make enough to supply the demand. Scores of patent-infringers sprang up and Wood spent most of his income from the plow in litigation. Then, with the development of steel plows by John Deere, the iron plow passed, for it dulled too quickly in virgin soil; principles of Jethro Wood's design were retained. They prevail today.



[▲] Jethro Wood. Left (top): Plow of Biblical times, as illustrated in a frieze in an ancient Egyptian building. Below it, a plow used in 1776, upon which Wood effected his historic improvements. Below: Spring plowing on the frontier with a Jethro Wood plow and span of oxen. [N. Y. Lib.]

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In the book entitled THE GREAT INDUSTRIES OF THE UNITED STATES, by Horace Greeley, Leon Case and others, Hartford: J. B. Burr & Hyde; Chicago and Cincinnati: J. B. Burr, Hyde & Co., 1872 it is said (pp. 136-137):

"We have not space to name the various patentees of plows in this country on from 1812 to 1820, an interesting period in the history of plow improvements; but we note Mr. Jethro Wood, of New York, to whom letters patent were granted July 1, 1814, and again September 1, 1819. Mr. Wood's plow became exceedingly popular, and did more to drive out the clumsy plows of the olden time than any other which had then been invented. There were sold in New York city, of Wood's plows, in 1817, fifteen hundred and fifty; in 1818, sixteen hundred; in 1819, thirty-six hundred; and in the year 1820, the sales were largely augumented. It is alleged that Mr. Wood not only made no profits by his efforts to improve the plow, but that he actually lost large sums by his enterprise. Mr. Wood's efforts were, however, lately recognized by the New York State legislature, who appropriated two thousand dollcars to his heirs. Many other plows were patented subsequently, but as they founded their claims to public favor upon some real or fancied improvements, and soon went out of use, it is unnecessary to describe them."

VIII. BENJAMIN HOWLAND WOOD (Jethro[7], John[6], John[5], Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1].)

b. February 24, 1797, undoubtedly in Saratoga County, New York, inasmuch as all records indicate his parents were living there from the time of their marriage in 1793 until 1799, when they settled in the town of Ledyard in Cayuga County. He probably lived until his marriage with his parents and brother and sisters on the farm his father described in his will as "my homestead farm lying in the town of Ledyard...containing about 250 acres." As has been noted above, his father's--Jethro's--house still is standing on the property in 1962, occupied and in good condition, and surrounded by very beautiful country.

m. October 14, 1819, at Bath, Steuben County, New York, Helen Ann Townsend, daughter of Henry Arnold and Elizabeth (Moffat) Townsend* of Bath. She was born December 24, 1802, at Bath. According to a family paper written out by her son, Edward Townsend Wood, she and her husband, Benjamin, and their family lived in Bath until 1845, "when the family moved to my Grand-mother Wood's farm, near Aurora, Cayuga County, New York, and continued to reside there and at Aurora until 1850, when my mother removed to Albany." Benjamin had died in 1846. His widow and family lived in Albany until some time after the marriage of their daughter, Fanny Cameron Wood, to Franklin Edson in Albany in 1856. Later Helen Ann (Townsend) Wood lived with her daughter and son-in-law, Fanny Cameron (Wood) and Franklin Edson, in their home at Fordham Heights, New York, for many years until her death there on February 23, 1882. Her granddaughter, Edith, often spoke in later years of "Grandma Wood," of whom they all were very fond. Her funeral service was held at St. James Episcopal Church, Fordham Heights. She first was buried in the Old Homestead Cemetery (see p. 9 hereof), in the town of Ledyard, Cayuga County. Her remains were moved November 19, 1891, to the Moore plot in the Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York, where her eldest daughter, Elizabeth Moffat Wood, wife of Dr. Francis Moore, is buried.

Benjamin is mentioned in the will of his father, Jethro, who died in 1834:

> "Third: I give and bequeath to my son Benjamin H. Wood the sum of one thousand dollars to be taken out of the plough business which is in his hands."

The petition for probate of the will was made by Benjamin H. Wood "of Bath."

The pamphlet entitled "A Plain Statement of Facts in relation to the application for remuneration by the heirs of Jethro Wood," copies of which follow, states:

> "His (Jethro's) son Benjamin, who was appointed his executor, took the matter up where his father left it, but finding that it was impossible, under the then defective patent laws, to protect the invention, he came to Washington, and with the

*See Townsend--"Genealogy of My Mother's Family," by Edward Townsend Wood pp. 70-a and 70-b.

aid of such men as Clay, Webster, and John Quincy Adams, succeeded in procuring the passage of the act of August 29, 1842, which was the origin of our present law of design patents, and under which alone he was able to protect the principal features of the invention--the form or configuration of the mouldboard."

William H. Seward (see p. 12) was Benjamin's counsel in matters pertaining to the plow, and many difficulties, described in the phamphlets following, were experienced in the attempt to protect the rights to the patent. Finally, when the last grant of the patent (to 1847) had little more than a year to run, Benjamin again went to Washington to attempt to obtain a renewal. However, the burdens and strain of the matter proved too much for him, and he collapsed and died suddenly--on the White House steps, it has been said--February 28, 1846, at the age of 49. He is buried in the Congressional Cemetery, Washington, D. C.

Benjamin and Helen Ann (Townsend) Wood had five children:

1. Elizabeth Moffat,
   b. Aug. 6, 1820, at Bath, Steuben County, New York
   m. Dr. Francis Moore -- 7 children.

2. Sarah Grinnell
   b. May 5, 1822, at Bath
   d. unmarried.

3. Edward Townsend
   b. May 10, 1829 "in the old Cameron place across the Cohocton River," Bath.
   m. Martha Jane Meech -- 1 son.

4. Albert Henry
   b. February 15, 1832, Bath
   m. Caroline Aikin -- 5 children

5. Fanny Cameron Wood)
   b. March 21, 1835, at Bath) SEE BELOW.
   m. Franklin Edson -- 7 children)

There is in this writer's possession in 1962 a letter written in 1845 by her great grandfather, Benjamin Howland Wood, to his son Edward Townsend Wood, reading as follows:

"Auburn, 7th Oct. '45 (1845)

Dear Sir

My Dear Son

Edward

It has become my painful duty to inform you of the death of my dear Mother. She departed this life on Saturday. It was unexpected. Doc^{t} Thompson told me he could see no simptoms at all alarming, as late as Friday morning--that I might go away and attend to my bu^{s}. I do not know where your Ma is. You will please inform her. We are all in deep trouble--neighbors all the

the time coming in but we are truly lonely.
----My plough bus. will in all probability come on for trial on the 21 of this month. I sent by express to care of Joseph Fellows a package containing boots & shoes for your Ma & Fanny. Have they been rec^{d} Mr. Fellows has written he had rec^{d} them & would send them by 1st opportunity. My dear Son I am in full trouble & truly in affliction. Am here about plough bus. & have no more time (to) write you.

Please remember me to Ma & Fanny & all and let me know where they are. Direct your letter to me Syracuse, Onondaga Co.

B. H. Wood

P. S.

Say to Robert Campbell Esq$^{r.}$ that M$^{r.}$ Leland has not the declarations nor pleas in the suit against David Anthony and also against Herman Camp, that M$^{r.}$ Leland wishes him to send him them and copies of the same between this and the 17th by private conveyance if he can that Mr. Leland has the notices.

B. H. Wood

Show the above to Robert Campbell, Esq$^{r.}$ immediately. Write to Judge Leland immediately & inform him what Mr. Campbell Esquire says, and pay the postage."

IX. FANNY CAMERON WOOD (probably christened "Frances" but always called Fanny.)
(BENJAMIN HOWLAND[8], Jethro[7], John[6], John[5], Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1])

b. March 21, 1835, at Bath, Steuben Co., New York.

In a family paper written by Fanny Cameron Wood's brother, Edward Townsend Wood, he says:

> "I was born at Bath, Stuben Co., New York, in the old mansion across the Cohocton River known as the 'Cameron Place' on May 10, 1829. My father then resided there, and I resided at Bath until 1845, when the family removed to my Grand-mother Wood's* farm, near Aurora, Cayuga Co., New York, and continued to reside there and at Aurora until 1850 when my mother removed to Albany."

This statement probably also applies to Fanny, and explains the fact that she was married in Albany.

m. November 19, 1856, in St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Albany, Franklin Edson,** son of Ophir and Soviah (Williams) Edson. He was born April 5, 1832, in Chester, Windsor County, Vermont, and died in New York City September 19, 1904, at his home, 42 West 71st Street. In 1852 he joined his brother Cyrus in the distilling business in Albany. In 1866 he formed the firm of Edson, Orr & Chamberlain, produce and commission agents in Albany. He removed to New York City several years later, where he became a man of considerable prominence. Among other important posts he was President of the New York Produce Exchange in 1873, and 1874 and 1878, and Mayor of New York City in 1883 and 1884. His home for the greater part of his life was at Fordham Heights, New York. He was Vestryman of St. James Episcopal Church, Fordham, for many years.

Fanny and Franklin Edson's home at Fordham Heights--from the accounts told to this writer by her mother, Edith, who was their daughter, was a happy one in every way. It was a spacious home, with ample room for the many comings and goings of brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, cousins and neighbors who visited there frequently. There were servants and a gardner, horses and a white pony "Snowball" for Edith. Fanny was an accomplished musician, playing the piano very beautifully. There is a very handsome portrait of her, painted, her daughter Edith always proudly said, when she was "a noted beauty of Albany." It is in an oval gilt fram, and is in the possession in 1962 of her granddaughter, Dorothy (Benner) Whitbeck, the writer.

Fanny Cameron (Wood) Edson died at her home in Fordham Heights, New York, June 1, 1893. She and her husband both are buried in his plot in The Rural Cemetery, Albany, New York.

They had seven children:

*Sylvia (Howland) Wood, who died Oct. 4, 1845.

**For Edson genealogy see EDSONS IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA by Jarvis B. Edson, Knickerbocker Press, New York City, 1903.

The following is a complete list of the seven children of Franklin and Fanny Cameron (Wood) Edson, together with their children. Marriages and descendants of the latter are not included here except in the case of Edith Edson, although there are in 1962 sometimes two and three additional generations.

(1) Cyrus Edson, b. Sept. 8, 1857, in Albany, New York; d. in New York City December 1903. m. (1st) Aug. 5, 1881, in New York City, Virginia Churchill Page, dau. of William Rufus and Juliette (Churchill) Page, b. in Norfolk, Va., July 10, 1854. She d. in New York City July 30, 1891. He (Cyrus) m. 2nd Apr. 6, 1892, in New York City, Mary Emma Van Velsor Quick, daughter of Henry and Mary Louise (Dusenbury) Van Velsor and widow of William Howell Quick of New York City. Children--all by 1st wife: Franklin Churchill and Helen Augusta (twins) born April 18, 1882; Florence, b. Apr. 13, 1883; Ruth, b. March 17, 1886; William Russell, b. June 4, 1888 --all b. in New York City.

(2) Franklin Edson, b. September 20, 1859, in Albany, New York; d. in Greenwich, Conn., Jan. 1, 1926. m. Nov. 23, 1897, in New York City, Elsie Morgan Squier, dau. of Stuart Craig and Caroline Elizabeth (LaBau) Squier, b. in Rahway, N. J., Dec. 18, 1876. Children: Stuart Franklin, b. June 20, 1900; Roger Cameron, b. May 20, 1903; Franklin Edson, 3rd, b. March 18, 1907; Stephen Morgan, b. May 3, 1913.

(3) David Orr Edson, b. in Albany, New York, Feb. 17, 1862; d. in New York City Feb. 27, 1923. m. Nov. 30, 1902, Grace (Wells) Perry, dau. of George William and Emma Grant (Hamilton) Wells. No children. Her first husband, whom she had married in London, England, and from whom she was divorced, was W. Talbot Perry.

(4) Henry Townsend Edson, b. Aug. 13, 1864, in Albany, N. Y.; d. Sept. 1903, in New York City. m. Feb. 1, 1887, in Philadelphia, Pa., Susan Douglas Diehl, dau. of Thomas Jacobi and Margarette M. (Whetharill) Diehl. 1 child, who d. unm.

(5) EDITH EDSON, b. October 17, 1870, at Fordham Heights, New York. SEE BELOW. m. Willis Benner.

(6) Robert Stewart Edson, b. Feb. 5, 1873, at Fordham Heights, New York; d. July 29, 1941, at Harwichport, Mass.; m. July 5, 1899, at Blue Mountain Lake, Hamilton Co., N. Y., Fanny Ropes, dau. of Charles Henry and Jennie (Hale) Ropes. 1 child: Fanny Cameron Edson, b. Apr. 1, 1900, New York City.

(7) Ethel Townsend Edson, b. Aug. 26, 1877, at Fordham Heights, New York; d. Apr. 4, 1947, in New York City. m. June 5, 1902, at New York City, Arthur Hoffman Van Brunt, son of Charles Holmes and Amelia Chesterman (Henry) Van Brunt. Children: Carol Van Brunt, b. May 16, 1903; ~~Arth~~ Edson Van Brunt, Arthur Hoffman Van Brunt, Jr., and David Chesterman Van Brunt. (Edson Van Brunt was b. in New York City May 3, 1906; Arthur Hoffman Van Brunt, Jr., b. June 11, 1910 (New York City.))

There is copied below an excerpt from a letter in this writer's possession written at Troy, New York, November 20, 1856, by Othneil Williams Edson (b. Chester, Vt., 1818) to his daughter, Catherine Zada Edson, who was 13 years old when the letter was written and apparently was away at boarding school. Othneil Williams Edson was a brother of Franklin Edson, and the letter describes the wedding of Franklin Edson and Fanny Cameron Wood (parents of Edith Edson) in Albany, New York, November 19, 1856. His statement that they were married in St. Paul's Church is an error, as this writer has received from St. Peter's Church, Albany, the record of their marriage in that church. Before their marriage Fanny had been a member of St. Peter's. Franklin was a member of St. Paul's:

"I went down to the wedding of your Uncle Frank yesterday. I suppose it was a briliant (do I spell it right?) wedding. They were married in St. Paul's Church, Albany. The church was full of people, a carpet was laid from the carriage to the door of the church. Miss Fanny looked very fine but I cannot describe her dress so you will probably never know how she appeared unless you ask her yourself. Frank was quite self possessed & looked well. I think them as fine looking couple as I have ever seen. They were married at 12 o'clock & received their friends from 12½ to 2½ o'clock & went to New York at 5 o'clock. They will go to Washington where I understand they are to be the guests of the Minister to Russia recently returned, (whose name I have forgotten) who is a friend of Miss Wood's family. Gov. Clark & daughters & other dignitaries of Albany were there, some over 200 invitations were given. Cols. & Judges abounded. The Jones band were engaged but disappointed them. I have not much sympathy with so much fashion & gaiety but I think I am not wrong in saying Miss Wood, or rather Mrs. Edson, is a very worthy woman with but little fashionable folly & a good share of practical common sense."

The little girl to whom the letter was addressed later was Edith Edson's beloved "Cousin Kate," and Edith Kept the letter all her life.

There is a very handsome portrait of Fanny Cameron (Wood) Edson, painted when she was "a noted beauty of Albany," her daughter Edith always proudly said. It is framed in an oval gilt frame, and shows her as a lovely young woman. It is in the possession in 1962 of Edith Edson Benner's daughter, Dorothy Benner Whitbeck.

X. EDITH EDSON (Fanny Cameron (Wood) Edson[9], Benjamin Howland Wood[8], Jethro[7], John[6], John[5], Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1].)

Born October 17, 1870, at her parents' home at Fordham Heights, New York.

In addition to the description of her girlhood home given on page 18 hereof, it may be added that she loved to reminisce throughout her life about the good times she and her sister and five brothers had in their happy home at Fordham Heights, and with their neighbors on "The Ridge." Her grandmother, her mother's mother, Helen Ann (Townsend) Wood, lived with them there for many years until her death in 1882. The latter's husband, Benjamin Howland Wood (p. 15) had died in 1846 at the age of 49. Edith often spoke of "Grandma Wood," of whom they all were very fond.

Edith and her sister Ethel were tutored at home by Miss Ella M. Dwinell, a governess who lived with them for many years and who remained a lifelong friend. Edith also attended Miss Comstock's school for young ladies in New York City for a time, and was a member all of her young years of St. James' Episcopal Church, Fordham, where her father was a vestryman. In 1883 her father, Franklin Edson (p. 18) officiated as Mayor of New York City at the ceremonies on the occasion of the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge on May 24th of that year, and his daughter Edith, who was 13 years old at the time, remembered all of her life having been with her father on that historic and gala occasion.

She married, June 30, 1902, at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, Fifth Ave., New York City, Willis Benner*, son of Robert and Mary Van Antwerp (Shaw) Benner. She was his second wife, his first wife, Caroline Charlotte McElroy --whom he had married in 1885, and by whom he had two sons, Roger and Hildreth**--having died August 27, 1889. Willis Benner was born August 6, 1858, at his parents' home, 108 Woolsey Street, Astoria, Long Island. He was baptized May 29, 1859, in the Dutch Reformed Church, Astoria. He graduated from Yale University in 1880, and from Columbia Law School in 1882. He died May 5, 1932, at his home, 37 Tanglewylde Avenue, Bronxville, Westchester County, New York.

Edith (Edson) Benner died June 13, 1959, at her apartment at 12 East 97th Street, New York City, that had been her home for 17 years. Her funeral service was held at St. James' Episcopal Church, Madison Avenue and 71st Street, New York City, on June 17, 1959. She and her husband are buried in his plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, Woodlawn, New York.

This writer would like to add also that her mother, Edith, was lovely looking always, and that there is a small oval mineature of her painted in color on porcelain, showing her as a very beautiful young woman with blue eyes and brown hair. It is in the possession of her daughter Dorothy. She and her husband were devoted to one another, and to their children, and endeavored throughout their lives to instill in their children an appreciation of their background and upbringing--always with emphasis on the importance of being honest, upright, loyal, Christian citizens.

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*For Benner ancestry, see chapter "The Benner Family" in "History of Rhinebeck, Dutchess Co., N. Y.," by E. M. Smith, pub. about 1881.

**For more complete account, see "Willis Benner and his Family," etc., by Dorothy (Benner) Whitbeck, a copy of which, together with this Wood family piece, is to be filed with the New York Public Library.

Children of Willis and Edith (Edson) Benner:

1. Dorothy, b. May 13, 1903, 61 West 54th Street, New York City.
   m. September 26, 1936, in Christ Episcopal Church, Bronxville, Westchester County, New York, John Fonda Ward Whitbeck, son of Dr. Brainerd Hunt and Edith Emily (Plummer) Whitbeck of Bronxville. He was born at his parents' temporary home at Saranac Lake, New York, August 25, 1904. No children.

2. Marjorie, b. June 2, 1910, 105 Montrose Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey.
   m. and divorced Dyer W. Ramsey, Jr. No children.

3. Robert Van Antwerp Benner, b. February 17, 1913, at his parents' home, 105 Montrose Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey.
   m. Jean Claire Davis. 3 children in 1962.
   SEE BELOW.

XI. ROBERT VAN ANTWERP BENNER (Edith (Edson) Benner[10], Fanny Cameron (Wood) Edson[9], Benjamin Howland Wood[8], Jethro[7], John[6], John[5], Jedediah[4], William[3], William[2], John[1].)

b. February 17, 1913, at the home of his parents, 105 Montrose Avenue, South Orange, New Jersey. Baptized July 16, 1913, by the Rector of St. Andrews' Episcopal Church, South Orange, at the home of his parents.

Served in the United States Army in the Second World War from 1943-1947, time overseas being in the Pacific theatre.

For a full account about him to date, see "Willis Benner and his Family," etc., by Dorothy (Benner) Whitbeck, 1960.

m. in 1957 Jean Claire Davis, daughter of Jasper D. and Evelyn (Robbins) Davis of Holland Township, Milford, New Jersey. She was living in New York City at the time of their marriage. She was born August 5, 1927, in Holland Township.

Their children, in 1962:

XII. 1. Barbara Ann Benner
b. October 24, 1957, New York City
bp. May 3, 1958, at St. James Episcopal Church, Madison Ave. and 71st Street, New York City.

XII. 2. Robert Van Antwerp Benner, Jr.
b. September 28, 1959, New York City
bp. June 26, 1960, at St. James Episcopal Church, as above.

XII. 3. Mary Shaw Benner
b. January 25, 1961, at Waterbury, Connecticut.
bp. June 18, 1961, at St. James Episcopal Church " "

Their home in 1962 is in ~~Naugatuck~~ Watertown, Connecticut.

Completed August, 1962

Dorothy B. Whitbeck

References mentioned in the foregoing pages:

A BRIEF GENEALOGICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF ARTHUR, HENRY AND JOHN HOWLAND AND THEIR DESCENDANTS, OF THE U. S. AND CANADA, by Franklyn Howland (1st Edition, New Bedford, Mass., 1885, published by the author, Vol. I.) On file at N. Y. Public Library.

*Benner ancestry: HISTORY OF RHINEBECK, DUTCHESS CO., NEW YORK by E. M. Smith, published about 1881. In the writer's possession.

COLLECTIONS OF CAYUGA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, pub. 1882 (Vol. 2). This volume contains a picture of Jethro Wood, and a picture of the cast iron plow invented by him. On file in the N. Y. Pub. Lib.

Coulson, Louise G. (Mrs. Kenneth), co-Town Historian, Scipio Center, Cayuga County, New York, who has most generously given of her time and efforts in supplying invaluable historic and genealogical data relating to the Wood and Howland families. Without her help this Wood family piece could not have been completed by this writer. It should be noted here that in addition to her many other achievements, Mrs. Coulson has copied the inscriptions on the headstones of some 80 cemeteries in recent years.

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN WOOD OF PORTSMOUTH, R. I. (6 generations):
Part I, John (2) Wood
The Little Compton, R. I., Branch.
Part II, Thomas (2) Wood
The Swansea, Mass., Branch
Part III, William (2) Wood
The Dartmouth, Mass., Branch.
By Eugene D. Preston (Colorado Springs, Colo., 1916.) On file in the N. Y. Pub. Lib.

*Edson ancestry: EDSONS IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA, by Jarvis B. Edson, Knickerbocker Press, New York City, 1903.

Family paper by Edward Townsend Wood, grandson of Jethro, copies of which are in the possession of various members of the family, including this writer.

GENEALOGICAL DICTIONARY OF RHODE ISLAND by John Osborne Austin, pub. by Munsells Sons, 1887. On file in the New York Pub. Lib.

GENEALOGY OF THE WOOD FAMILY AND ALLIED LINES, by George E. Wood; revised and edited by Wallace A. Wood Dec. 1, 1942. N. Y. Pub. Lib.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF FRIENDS IN CAYUGA COUNTY, by Miss Emily Howland. Excerpts, unidentified, but probably a chapter written by her for a book of historical data on Cayuga County and its Society of Friends (Quakers).

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*Also see: "WILLIS BENNER AND HIS FAMILY, including Shaw and Van Antwerp; and also Edson, the family of his wife, Edith Edson, including Wood, Howland and Townsend," by Dorothy (Benner) Whitbeck, 1960, copy of which has been filed with the New York Public Library.

References (continued):

HISTORY OF CAYUGA COUNTY, NEW YORK, by Elliott G. Storke. Published in Syracuse, New York, 1879. On file at N. Y. Pub. Lib.

HISTORY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, NEW YORK, by _____ Johnson; as reported to this writer by Miss Gladys Ladu, Assistant Librarian, The New York State Library, University of the State of New York, Albany, New York.

LEONARD PAPERS, by Elisha C. Leonard. Manuscript on file at the New Bedford Free Public Library, New Bedford, Mass.

[illegible] BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY. (Reported by The Putnam Bookstore, New York City, to Willis Benner by letter dated January 4, 1928.)

VITAL RECORDS OF DARTMOUTH, MASS., TO THE YEAR 1850 - Vol. I, Births; Vol. II, Marriages. On file at N. Y. Pub. Lib.

Wood, Edward Townsend, grandson of Jethro Wood--family paper written out by E.T.W. in the possession of various members of the family, including the writer.

WOOD FAMILY NOTES FROM RECORDS IN NEW BEDFORD, MASS. (Book 9, Peirce Papers--a collection of manuscript note books compiled by Miss Emma E. Peirce. Revolutionary War List and Wood Family--located in the New Bedford Free Public Library.

Wood, Jethro - JETHRO WOOD, INVENTOR OF THE MODERN PLOW--A brief account of his life, services and trials; together with facts subsequent to his death, and incident to his great invention, by Frank Gilbert, Chicago, Rhodes & McClure, 1882. Copies in the possession of Robert V. A. Benner, Naugatuck, Conn., Boston Public Library, Boston, Mass., Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.

Wood, Jethro, 1774-1834 - U. S. 15693.91.10. "A Plain Statement of facts in relation to the application for remuneration by the heirs of Jethro Wood." On file at Boston Public Lib., Boston, Mass., and at Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass.

Wood, Jethro, 1774-1834 - U. S. 15691.91.15. Myers, Leonard, 1827-1905. The bill for relief of the heirs of Jethro Wood; remarks. On file at Boston Public Lib. and Harvard College Lib.

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*For Howland line of descent see "Willis Benner and his Family," by Dorothy B. Whitbeck, p. 69

**For Townsend also see "Willis Benner and his Family," etc., pp. 70-a, 70-b.

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